

November 17, 2011

Via ECFS

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: Notice of *Ex Parte* Presentation: MB Docket No. 11-154
*Closed Captioning of Internet Protocol-Delivered Video Programming:
Implementation of the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video
Accessibility Act of 2010*

Dear Ms. Dortch,

This is to notify you that on November 15, 2011, representatives of HDMI Licensing, LLC (“HDMI Licensing”) and its founding members met with Federal Communications Commission (“FCC” or “Commission”) staff to discuss interfaces and interconnection mechanisms with respect to the above-captioned proceeding. Specifically, the following individuals attended the meeting:

- Steve Venuti, President of HDMI Licensing, and the undersigned and Neil Chilson, both of Wilkinson Barker Knauer, LLP, counsel to HDMI Licensing
- Paul Schomburg and Anthony Jasionowski, Panasonic Corporation of North America
- Thomas Patton, Philips Electronics of North America
- Seth Greenstein of Constantine Cannon LLP, counsel to Hitachi, Ltd.

The attendees met with Alison Neplokh, Jeffrey Neumann, Mary Beth Murphy, Steven Broeckaert, and Diana Sokolow of the Media Bureau, and Rosaline Crawford, Eliot Greenwald, and Roger Holberg of the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau. Attending via telephone were Alan Stillwell of the Office of Engineering and Technology and Tom Apone of the Media Bureau. The attached handout was distributed at the meeting.

Mr. Venuti provided a brief overview of the HDMI technology standard and HDMI Licensing’s work. The HDMI standard is the first and only industry-supported, uncompressed, HD video, multi-channel audio interface. It delivers crystal-clear digital quality via a single cable, benefiting all consumers (including the deaf and hard of hearing community) by providing

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a simple, high-quality home theater experience. The HDMI standard was developed by a consortium of seven technology companies: Hitachi, Panasonic, Philips, Silicon Image, Sony, Thomson (RCA), and Toshiba, known as the HDMI Founders. The Founders, through HDMI Licensing, license the standard to over 1,200 manufacturers who have installed it in more than two billion devices, making HDMI the *de facto* standard digital interface for HD in the consumer electronics market.

Consistent with the comments and reply comments filed by HDMI Licensing in this proceeding, the attendees emphasized their desire to work with the FCC to make captioning on video programming more accessible to consumers. Accessing closed captioning has grown more complex in the current digital environment. When video content was transmitted using analog technology, the television was the lone source and display of video content. But in today's digital world, closed captions generally are decoded by source devices. Understandably, consumers sometimes are confused regarding how to enable captions because of the many sources of video in their home and the wide variation in captioning implementation style and quality.

The attendees underscored that HDMI Licensing is sympathetic to these frustrations and seeks to play a positive role in resolving them. As explained in the meeting, of the range of actions the Commission could take to address consumer concerns, mandating that the HDMI interface allow for the passing of closed captioning data is the most costly and most impractical. Such a mandate would require a change to the HDMI specification as well as hardware and software changes to video source and display devices. These changes would be very expensive, would take a long time to reach the consumer, and would not be compatible with the billions of existing HDMI devices in circulation. Instead, the attendees proposed that the Commission direct the Video Programming Accessibility Advisory Committee ("VPACC") to consider whether industry-developed protocols can permit consumers to better activate captioning functionality.

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This letter is filed pursuant to Section 1.1206 of the Commission's rules. Please direct any inquiries to the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

WILKINSON BARKER KNAUER, LLP

By: /s/ Natalie G. Roisman

Natalie G. Roisman
Counsel to HDMI Licensing, LLC

cc (via email):

Alison Neplokh
Jeffrey Neumann
Mary Beth Murphy
Steven Broeckaert
Diana Sokolow
Rosaline Crawford
Eliot Greenwald
Roger Holberg
Alan Stillwell
Tom Apone

HDMI Licensing, LLC

Implementation of CVAA IP Captioning Provisions (MB Docket No. 11-154)

HDMI Technology Offers Numerous Benefits for Consumers of Video Programming

- The High-Definition Multimedia Interface (“HDMI”) is the first and only industry-supported, uncompressed, HD video, multi-channel audio interface. It delivers crystal-clear digital quality via a single cable, providing consumers with a simple, high-quality home theater experience.
- The HDMI standard is the de facto standard digital interface for HD and the consumer electronics market. The installed base of HDMI devices today is estimated at over two billion.
- HDMI technology is continually evolving to meet the needs of the market.
- The HDMI standard has benefited all consumers by providing a cost-effective, high quality, and convenient interface solution.

HDMI Licensing Seeks to Promote the Accessibility of Video Programming on Multiple Platforms

- HDMI Licensing shares the Commission’s goal of increasing access to video programming for the deaf and hard-of-hearing community.
- Some consumers have expressed concerns regarding HDMI and closed captioning, and HDMI Licensing is sympathetic to these concerns. Providing closed captioning in the digital world is complicated, and the wide variety of source devices has resulted in inconsistent and sometimes confusing implementations of closed captioning that have been frustrating to some consumers. As the Commission has noted, however, set-top boxes with HDMI connectors *can* render closed captions.

The Commission Should Not Adopt Captioning Rules Applicable to Interfaces at This Time

- The Commission has a statutory obligation to promote accessibility of IP-delivered programming, but any rules governing interfaces should be limited to the narrow authority provided by Congress to assure interfaces are “*available*” that “enable the rendering or pass through of captions.” Any regulatory actions would be premature at this time, without a finding by the Commission that such interfaces are unavailable.
- If the Commission adopts interface rules, it should do so narrowly by focusing on the functional requirements needed for rendering or pass through of captions, and avoid imposing substantial costs on manufacturers and consumers. It is especially important that the Commission not attempt to fit analog solutions into a digital world.
- Mandating that the HDMI interface allow for the passing of closed captioning data will require a change to the specification as well as both hardware and software changes to source and display devices. The cost, and time to market, would be substantial. Open captions over the HDMI interface are available today, and fulfill the statutory requirements of the CVAA.

Recommendations

- The key for addressing consumer concerns is to ensure that source devices provide access to closed captioning in a consistent and easily accessible manner. To address this issue, HDMI LLC recommends the Commission request the VPAAC working group 4 to consider whether industry-developed protocols can permit consumers to “*activate and de-activate the closed captions and video description*” over interfaces used to deliver video programming with sound.
- To assist this effort, HDMI LLC would be willing to provide a tutorial on the HDMI Consumer Electronics Channel (“CEC”) protocol which is used to pass through remote control keys and other commands between devices connected over HDMI.